

Customer Service Connections

A publication of Saint Paul Regional Water Services

Winter 2006

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Cloudy Water

It's safe to drink, but what causes it?

To Serve You Better

Bill payment options provide one that's right for you

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SPRWS introduces a new and improved bill format

Beginning January 2006, our bills have a new look. First, you may have noticed a couple differences in our envelopes. We have updated the bill form to accommodate a new window envelope that is also "right-side-up." In addition, we have simplified the bill format, including the itemization of charges. The changes are designed to make the bills easier to read without sacrificing the details our customers need to understand the charges.

Changes in 2006 water, sewer rates and other fees

To maintain the high quality of our drinking water and the efficiency of our operations, the Board of Water Commissioners and the Saint Paul City Council have approved a 3 percent increase in water rates for 2006. Of the 3 percent, 1.3 percent will be used for debt service on a new Granulated Active Carbon (GAC) filtering system for our treatment plant.

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SPRWS earns water quality award

The *Partnership for Safe Water* has honored SPRWS with a Directors Award for "commitment to providing superior quality water to" our customers "beyond the requirements" of the regulations of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The *Partnership*, started in 1995, is a voluntary initiative sponsored by the EPA and five other safe drinking water organizations, including the American Waterworks Association (AWWA), the Association of Drinking Water Administrators, the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies, the National Association of Water Companies, and the AWWA Research Foundation. The *Partnership's* program, which consists of four separate phases, seeks to improve water quality "by using flexible technical tools" that enable water utilities to customize improvements to their treatment methods with limited spending.

The award to SPRWS was for completion of Phase III, which focused on improving turbidity (or particulate matter) in our drinking water. The EPA regulation calls for a 0.3 turbidity reading (measured in "NTUs") as the water leaves our treatment plant, while the more ambitious goal for the *Partnership* is less than 0.1 NTU, 95 percent of the time. During the June 2004 - June 2005 reporting period, SPRWS reached less than 0.1 NTU, 97.36 percent of the time. (Our 95th percentile was 0.092 NTU.)

Hundreds of utilities participate in the *Partnership's* program, but only 40 percent have reached Phase III. Moreover, SPRWS was one of only three water utilities in the entire Upper Midwest to receive the Directors Award for completion of Phase III. (The two other awards went to one utility each in Iowa and Wisconsin.)

We take great care and pride in providing the highest quality of drinking water to our customers, and it is gratifying to have our efforts and achievements acknowledged by our peers.

To Serve You Better

Saint Paul Regional Water Services offers **several payment options**. If you need help to decide which method is best for you, just give us a call. A Customer Service Representative will be happy to discuss each option in detail.

Direct payment plan. Never write another check for your water services, and never again worry about paying your bill on time. Join nearly 10,000 other SPRWS customers and have the amount due deducted electronically from your checking or savings account. You'll still receive a statement, but it will indicate which date each payment will be deducted from your account.

Monthly Manager Plan. This is an excellent tool for budgeting your monthly expenses. The utility calculates a fixed monthly payment based on your average water usage for the past 12 months. The fixed payment is deducted electronically each month from the account you designate. Every three months you'll receive a report showing your actual consumption, and once a year a "clean-up" statement will be calculated to reconcile your account. Available to quarterly customers only; there is no charge for this service.

Drop boxes. For next-day processing, use the McCarrons Campus drop box, located at 1900 Rice Street (open 24 hours). For 48-hour processing, the downtown drop box is located at Saint Paul City Hall, 15 Kellogg Blvd. (8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; visitors must pass through security.) Checks or money orders only, please.

In-person transactions. To pay your bills in person, walk into the McCarrons Campus office, 1900 Rice Street, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. We accept checks, money orders, cash, and can make credit arrangements.

Questions? Call Customer Service at 651-266-6350.

Winter cold contributes to appearance of cloudy water

Air bubbles make water look 'milky'

In the winter months, many people notice a milky or cloudy appearance to their tap water. This is caused by air bubbles trapped in the water. It is harmless and will disappear on its own if left out for a few minutes.

This phenomenon occurs more often in the winter due to the colder temperatures. Cold water can trap and hold larger amounts of dissolved oxygen than warm water. Most of our water comes from the Mississippi River, which then travels through a chain of lakes before arriving at our plant. This surface water is much colder in the winter months. Not only is the water cold coming into our treatment plant, but the pipes that deliver the water to your home from the plant are cold as well. In addition, water in the pipe is under pressure. That pressure makes it impossible for the air

in the water to get out while it is still in the pipes. Once it comes out of your faucet, it is no longer pressurized and the air begins to escape, like opening a pop can. The warmer room temperature also contributes to the release of air bubbles, as warmer water cannot hold as much air. As the air escapes and the bubbles rise to the surface, it looks cloudy. Sometimes there are enough bubbles that it looks like there is debris or small particles swirling around your glass. As the air dissipates, the water clears from the bottom of the glass to the top. Bubbles may attach to the sides of the glass as the water clears.

Trapping air is a natural phenomenon associated with cold water, and it does not affect water quality. If you have questions or concerns, you can always call our office at 651-266-6350.

Changes in 2006 water, sewer rates and other fees

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We anticipate that the GAC filtering system will greatly reduce or eliminate the seasonal taste and odor issues that are occasionally experienced in the summer months. The remaining 1.7 percent of the rate increase will be used for increases in the costs of operations, including personnel, materials, and supplies.

Other changes include sanitary sewer rates by the city of Saint Paul and sanitary and storm sewer rates by the city of Falcon Heights. The city of Maplewood added a 2 percent surcharge on water billings, which will amount to an average increase of about 70 cents a quarter per household. For more information on these changes, please see the back of your bill or call your local community.